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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the historical conditions and socio-political factors affecting the development of Japanese language schools in Hawaii. It traces the development of these schools from the time they were established to prepare Japanese children for their eventual return to Japan through years of legal battles and disfavor to the present, when the schools enjoy full rights to teach Japanese but suffer from a lack of student enthusiasm and motivation because of American acculturation on the part of the third and fourth generation Japanese-American children. (VM)

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THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECT OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN HAWAII

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The paper I am going to present now is a brief social history of the Japanese language in Hawaii. This history is sociolinguistically interesting because it shows that in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country like the United States, the rise and fall of the language of a minority ethnic group is very much determined by the socio-political conditions of the country. It also shows that the motivation of the children of a minority ethnic group to learn the language of their parents or grandparents depends greatly on the same socio-political conditions and their national and cultural identity.

Between 1885 when massive Japanese immigration began and 1924 when it was halted by the U.S. Government, about 150,000 Japanese came to Hawaii to work on its sugar plantations as contract farm laborers. Two-thirds of them eventually returned to Japan, but the rest stayed on and became founders of the Japanese community in Hawaii. Today the Japanese immigrants and their offspring Japanese-Americans constitute roughly a third of the population of the State of Hawaii, that is, about 230,000.

When Japanese immigrants first came to Hawaii, it was still a Kingdom. Almost all of these contract farm laborers did not entertain the intention of permanently settling down in Hawaii. They were to return to Japan as soon as they had saved a sufficient amount of money. In this situation their main concern regarding their children was about how they could bring them up as Japanese citizens while living abroad.

The first Japanese school in Hawaii was built in 1894 and many others were subsequently established. Since the purpose of these private schools was to educate the children of the Japanese immigrants as Japanese citizens, every effort was made to operate these schools like those in Japan. Their curriculum emphasized the teaching of the Japanese language, Japanese history, Japanese geography, and moral. The textbooks were the same as

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those used in Japan and the same holidays were observed. The children were taught to sing the Japanese national anthem.

In 1898 Hawaii became a U.S. Territory and the Japanese community encountered the first of the many problems to come later with regard to the education of their children. This was the problem of dual citizenship. Every child born of Japanese immigrant parents acquired Japanese citizenship as required by the Japanese law. The underlying assumption was that all Japanese abroad and their foreign-born children were to return to Japan eventually. Under the U.S. law every person born in the United States and its territories acquires U.S. citizenship automatically. And thus, since the annexation of Hawaii to the United States, the children of the Japanese immigrants acquired two citizenships, American and Japanese, as soon as they were born. They were Japanese-Americans from the American stand but they were American-Japanese from the Japanese stand. As a matter of fact, a new Japanese term was coined to label these American-Japanese. The term was nisei, meaning second generation. This term has since then become an English word to refer to the children of Japanese immigrants, that is, Japanese-Americans.

The dual citizenship of the Japanese-Americans complicated the nature and way of their formal education. What developed as a result was a dual educational system. The Japanese-Americans as U.S. citizens were required to attend regular public schools where the medium of instruction was, of course, English. Then, in the afternoon after school, they were forced by their parents to attend private Japanese schools to learn things Japanese. These Japanese-Americans were caught between the effort of the public schools to Americanize them and the effort of the Japanese schools to Japanize them.

It is understandable that Hawaii, as a new territory of the United States, took the task of Americanization very seriously, and the Japanese schools came under attack. The political pressure to put the Japanese schools out of existence kept building up until it climaxed during and immediately after World War I. The Americanization motto of the time was "one language under one flag."

In order to comply with this Americanization movement, the Japanese schools changed their goals and curriculum drastically. They now became Japanese language schools and stopped teaching Japanese history and geography. They began editing textbooks locally. In 1919 these Japanese language schools got together and made the following resolution (Ozawa, 1972, p. 92) to announce their intention publicly:

"We, the representatives of the teachers and principals of the Japanese Language Schools, institutions and educational homes under the control of the Japanese Educational Association of Hawaii solemnly declare that we have been bringing up the Japanese boys and girls in the Territory of Hawaii in accordance with the true ideals and principles of the United States of America.

"We, the representatives of the Japanese institutions in the Territory of Hawaii hereby resolve to seek betterment of the educational system of the language schools, institutions and educational homes in Hawaii.

"Further, we resolve to the best of our ability with the movement of the Americanization of the boys and girls now on foot, in order that the true aim of the movement may be attained."

The Japanese Educational Association of Hawaii
March 11, 1919, Honolulu, T. H.

The Japanese language schools tried to convince the Territorial Government that their new purpose was to teach the Japanese language to Japanese-Americans so that they could communicate with their immigrant parents, who were not allowed to become U.S. citizens then, and so that they could become good-will ambassadors between the United States and Japan.

All these efforts by the Japanese language schools did not satisfy the Hawaii Territorial Government. Several laws were passed in 1920's to control foreign language schools in Hawaii. In essence, these language school control laws required that (1) foreign languages be taught only after the third grade, (2) all foreign language textbooks be approved by the Territorial Department of Education, (3) all foreign language teachers be certified by the Department of Education, and (4) one dollar per pupil a semester be paid by foreign language schools to the Territorial Government (see Japanese Educational Association of Hawaii, 1937).

For all practical purposes, to obey these control laws meant for the Japanese language schools to close their business, especially because there was little hope that many of their Japanese-speaking teachers could pass the certifying examination. Thus, these schools took the issue, finally, to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1927 the Supreme Court passed the unanimous decision that the Hawaii language control laws were unconstitutional. As a result, the Japanese language schools in Hawaii, that once seemed destined to die out, began prospering. In 1939, just

before the outbreak of World War II, the number of the Japanese language schools in Hawaii reached 194 and their pupils numbered about 38,000. According to one survey (Smith, 1939), the Japanese-Americans of this period still learned Japanese as their first language at home and English as their second language in public schools, and about 50% of their conversation was carried on in Japanese even in public high schools. It may be additionally reported here that many parents sent their Japanese-American children--about 2,000 in 1940--to Japan for high school and higher education (Okahara, 1964).

Then came the most crucial trial of all for the Japanese-Americans. As soon as World War II broke out, martial law was declared in Hawaii, and on the second day of the war the leaders of the Japanese language schools and the Japanese community were arrested as enemy aliens and sent to the so-called relocation camps. The Japanese language schools were shut down and the state-wide "speak American" campaign began immediately. The Japanese-Americans not only tried to speak English only while their parents spoke Japanese in whispers, but also volunteered to serve in the U.S. army. We have heard much about the brilliant records of the 442nd and 100th battalions that consisted of Japanese-Americans.

When the war was over, the problem of double identity of the Japanese-Americans was solved greatly. Many of them denounced their Japanese citizenship. The war-time "speak American" movement almost became a habit among the Japanese-Americans and they began raising their children in English. Their immigrant parents abandoned the thought of returning to Japan, and, for the first time, the Japanese community was permanently settled in Hawaii both physically and psychologically.

In 1959 when Hawaii became the 50th State of the Union, every foreign language control law was abolished. Prior to this, in 1952, the Walter-McCarron Act was passed and every Japanese immigrant now could apply for U.S. citizenship. Today, in Honolulu alone, there are two Japanese language radio stations, one Japanese language television station, two daily Japanese language newspapers, and four bookstores that specialize in Japanese books and magazines. The members of the Japanese community are free to be as much American or Japanese as they wish to be, at least, from the language point of view. One may say that the Japanese community in Hawaii "has never had it so good."

But it is ironic that the Japanese community may never have it so good again in the future. The identity of Japanese-Americans in Hawaii is now unmistakably American (Kuroda, 1972), and to young Japanese-Americans, i.e., sansei and yonsei--the third and fourth

generation Japanese-Americans, learning Japanese is like learning French or Russian. In terms of language they are acculturated in American culture.

In 1948, many of the Japanese language schools were reopened, but there no longer was the enthusiasm of the pre-war years. Today there are 82 Japanese language schools and only about 9,000 pupils--about one-fourth of the pre-war figure--are enrolled in them. The teachers are constantly complaining that parents are sending their children to the Japanese language schools just to keep them off the street (Hawaii Hochi, 1969). It is ironic that the Japanese community as a whole fought so hard for the right to teach Japanese to Japanese-Americans and now that that right is not questioned by anybody, it is found difficult to motivate them to learn it.

To conclude this paper, I want to say simply that it will be interesting to watch the fate of the Japanese language schools in Hawaii in the future.

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